

*A REVIEW OF FIRST COURSE IN APPLIED
BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS BY PAUL CHANCE*

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Brooks/Cole Publishing has provided instructors with a creative option in the pursuit for innovative yet accurate introductory texts. Chance's *First Course in Applied Behavior Analysis* is a notable attempt to provide readings that are thorough, informative, and interesting for beginning students. The text assumes no prior educational experiences in psychology or behavior analysis. The text is unambiguous and extremely easy to read while introducing the basic principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis.

The majority of the text is written as a series of transcripts from a one-semester simulated classroom. These transcripts include questions, answers, and amusingly, interpretations from the students. The fictional characters provide the reader with opportunities to think critically and interact with the material, particularly when a character answers incompletely or incorrectly. The fictional professor (Dr. Cee) writes definitions on the board, provides examples of behavioral principles, gives handouts, and even assigns practice quizzes. The style is vaguely reminiscent of the instructor–student interactions found in Malott, Whaley, and Malott (1997).

Each chapter begins with a brief summary of the previous chapter and ends with a review of the material in the current chapter. At the end of each chapter the reader finds supplements including exercises, abbreviated research article reprints (many of which are classics), mini essays, recommended further

readings, and very informative endnotes. The clear organization and repeated form of the work (e.g., a definition, some examples, the “rules,” some problems) provide opportunities for the reader to predict methods for implementing the principle and the common problems faced during implementation.

The text introduces behavior-analytic principles in a way that allows readers to slowly build their verbal repertoires. Readers are introduced to new principles based on material found in earlier chapters. The text includes a breadth of principles in sections on the basics of operant and respondent conditioning, increasing and decreasing behavior, establishing discriminations, and generalization and maintenance. The text also includes information on modifying respondent behavior and on ethical issues in applied behavior analysis.

With all of its strengths, the text does have several limitations. The fictional professor typically presents only one side of even slightly controversial topics in the lecture, while other opinions are often found in the endnotes. Although these endnotes are very informative, ensuring that students read them will require some effort. This information may have been better placed as footnotes. Another minor limitation is that the “rules” for implementing specific behavioral principles are not listed together. Instead, they are separated by text. These rules should be summarized in the text to facilitate application of the principles in the exercises. Another potential limitation is the extreme ease with which the text is read. We agree with the author that “the challenge in

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a course . . . should come from figuring out how to apply scientific method . . . not from struggling with turgid prose of a text" (p. viii). However, advanced undergraduate students might find the text tedious or condescending. In addition, Chance recommends that students read each chapter at least twice. This is unlikely given the ease of reading.

Many of these limitations might occur only in a traditional lecture-style course for advanced undergraduate students. One of the major strengths of the text is that it provides an opportunity for a variety of audiences to learn about the principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis. The user-friendliness of the text makes it suitable for instructors who teach high school students. Trainers and consultants could use the book in applied settings with direct-service staff, either as take-home reading or as a course guide. The text could also be useful in parent training courses, particularly if supplemented with exercises involving children. Undergraduate research assistants with little or no background in behavior analysis could read the text before joining a research team. However, if the text is used with more advanced undergraduate students, instruc-

tors should emphasize the importance of the endnotes and possibly include supplementary course materials (e.g., journal articles).

An accompanying instructor's manual includes chapter outlines, classroom activities, practice quizzes, and a complete test bank. The test bank includes completion, true-false, multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions and is also available in a computerized format. In summary, this introductory text is thorough, well written, and informative; however, instructors should carefully plan strategies for overcoming the potential limitations, especially if this book is used with more advanced students. Chance has provided a text that can help behavior analysts reach new audiences. *First Course in Applied Behavior Analysis* is a welcomed addition to the library of introductory behavior analysis texts.

REFERENCES

- Chance, P. (1998). *First course in applied behavior analysis*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
 Malott, R. W., Whaley, D. L., & Malott, M. E. (1997). *Elementary principles of behavior* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

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